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THE GULL

MAY - 8 1990



Golden Gate Audubon Society

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Volume 72 Number 5 May 1990

THE LAST GREAT WILDERNESS

This season's last (great) program—May 10 in Berkeley—will be a multi-media slide show about the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**, perhaps our last unspoiled ecosystem in North America. Entitled “The Last Great Wilderness”, and nationally acclaimed, this was created by the Sonoma based **Coalition for Our Earth**.

The program will feature outstanding photography of the Refuge, an area graced with tremendous scenic beauty, teaming with hundreds of diverse species of plants and animals; the area is vitally linked to the more than ten thousand year old Gwich'in nation, a subsistence people who are dependent on this region for their survival. The presentation will also feature an overview of the current pressures to develop this fragile ecosystem for oil, and will offer a forum hosted by members of the Coalition to address questions about the area.

Some of you will remember the stunning program the Coalition did at the Audubon meeting in San Francisco a couple of years ago. I understand that they have only improved on what was an already knowledgeable, heartfelt and artistically done account of the issues facing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. For those of you who missed it, you have another chance, this time in Berkeley. For those of you who saw it the first time, I know you'll be back!

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 10 at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda in Berkeley. Refreshments will be served (before, during and after the meeting).

JOELLA BUFFA
Program Chairman

SPONSOR A CLASSROOM?

Audubon Adventures is an environmental education program (see *The GULL* for April, page 68 for a teacher's thanks) developed by National Audubon for the 3-6 grade classrooms. Six times a year teachers receive a packet of 30 newsletters and an instructional guide to use with their students. This year's topics included spiders, mammals, conifers, and recycling. 9,500 classrooms (and 275,000 students) nationwide participated in this program.

GGAS sponsored 21 classrooms this past year at a cost of \$30 per classroom. We believe that this is an

excellent way to promote awareness of environmental concepts. Many of our teachers have asked whether they can expect AA again next year. The Education Committee's budget for 1990-91 is approximately \$650. We can sponsor not more than 21 classrooms next year unless we receive addditional contributions from our membership. Other teachers, who did not participate this year, have asked to be included (and we have done very little advertising for this program). We know that we could place Audubon Adventures in many more classrooms if we had the money.

If you would like to sponsor an Audubon Adventure classroom next year, send us \$30 (indicate it is for AA). If you are a teacher, or know a teacher, who would like to use AA next year, please let us know.

DAVID RICE
Education Committee

FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR

Saturday, May 5—Birding by Ear.
Briones Regional Park.

Sunday, May 6—Wildcat Canyon
Regional Park.

Wednesday, May 9—Mini-trip to
Briones Regional Park.

For details on the above trips see *The GULL* for April.

Sunday, May 13—Beginners' trip to
Mountain Lake, San Francisco. meet at
the parking lot at the end of 15th Ave.
(just north of Lake St.) at 8 a.m. Bring
binoculars and a field guide if you have
them. We expect to see three or four
species of swallows plus a variety of
waterbirds and landbirds during this
two-hour walk. Leader: Janet Murphy
(751-0197).

Published each month except August by the Golden Gate Audubon Society, office address, 1250 Addison Street, #107B, Berkeley, CA 94702. Special third class postage paid in Oakland, CA.

Saturday, May 19—Mt. St. Helena.
Meet at 8 a.m. at the junction of Ida
Clayton Rd. and Hwy. 128, 6.3 miles
north of Calistoga. Roadside birding
will cover five different habitats, where
the birds are more often heard than
seen. Warblers, Sage Sparrows,
Pileated Woodpeckers and Lazuli Buntings
will be among the birds we will
look and listen for. Bring lunch and
liquids. Carpool if at all possible
because parking is very limited and we
must caravan to bird the roadside. Call
Russ Wilson (524-2399) for trip con-
firmation if you plan to go on this trip.
Leader: Dick Johnson (eve. 530-7718)
(day 486-5162). (✓)

Sunday, May 20—Point Reyes Na-
tional Seashore. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at
the Park Headquarters (one mile west
of Olema). We will car shuttle to Five
Brooks Stable trailhead and hike back
five miles through the Vedana property
looking for songbirds. Bring lunch.
Leaders: Gloria Markowitz and Ken
Ackerman. (892-2910) (✓).

Friday-Sunday, June 1-3—Birding
by Ear in Yosemite. The lower and
middle elevations of Yosemite national
Park are alive with singing birds in
early June. A variety of habitats support
a rich diversity of birdlife, typically in-
cluding seven flycatchers (four Em-
pidonax) three vireos, seven warblers,
and many other species in full song and
breeding plumage. Meet at the Big Oak
flat entrance on Friday, June 1 at 3
p.m., and Saturday, June 2 at 7 a.m.
(If you arrive later Saturday morning,
meet the group in Hogdon Meadow
behind the Hogdon Meadow Group

(THE GULL -ISSN 0164-971X)

Campsites.) The meeting place is the large parking lot 100 yards inside the park entrance on Hwy. 120.

Nearby campgrounds include Hogdon Meadow (res. required) and Crane Flat in the Park, Carlon and Middle Fork (primitive Forest Service) on the road to Hetch Hetchy, and Sweetwater on Hwy. 120. Lodging on Hwy. 120 includes Yosemite Gatehouse (209/379-2260), Evergreen Lodge (209/379-2606), Lee's Middle Fork (209/962-7408), and Buck Meadows Lodge (209/962-6366). The meeting place is 30 miles from Yosemite Valley.

Bring warm clothes, raingear, rubber boots (wet meadows), be prepared to pack a lunch and walk about six miles. Leader: Dave Cornman (825-2106) \$(✓)

Saturday-Sunday, June 9-10—Yuba Pass Nd vicinity. On Saturday meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Yuba Pass Summit parking area 15 miles east of Sierra City. We will bird the mountain areas for summer residents including flycatchers, warblers and Calliope Hummingbirds.

On Sunday meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 49 and 89 about 3 miles east of Sattley. We will caravan to Sierra Valley and see many of the birds of the eastern Sierra including Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Take I-80 to Truckee, go north on Hwy. 89 to Sierraville and take Hwy. 49 west to Yuba Summit. (Or take Hwy. 49 northeast from Auburn.) Camping is available at the Wild Plum and Chapman campgrounds on Hwy 49 (U.S. Forest Service). Lodging is available at Sierra City: Sierra Chalet (916-862-1110), Buttes Motel (916-862-1170), Herrington's Sierra Pines (916-862-1151), Bassett Station Motel (916-862-1297), Sierra Buttes Inn Motel (916-862-1191), and Yuba River Inn (916-862-1122). Leader: Peter Allen (892-8063). (✓)

Wednesday, June 13—Mini-trip to Redwood Regional Park. Meet at the

park at 9:30 a.m. Take the Warren Freeway, exit onto Redwood Rd. and proceed east about three miles to Redwood Gate, southern entrance to the park. Leave the cars at the small parking lot just inside parking lot on left. Bring lunch. We should see Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Oriole, Solitary, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (351-9301) and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (✓).

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty getting in touch with a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chmn. (524-2399).

Plan Ahead:

June 16-17—Mono Basin. Leaders: Helen and Paul Green.

June 22-24—Lassen Volcanic National Park. Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy.

Aug. 2-5—Backpacking to Snag Lake, Lassen Volcanic National Park. Leaders: David Rice and Robin Pulich.

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

OBSERVATIONS THROUGH MARCH 28

The word is that it had to happen sometime—it was just a question of when. "When" turned out to be Tuesday, March 27th. Keith Hansen set out for Pine Gulch Creek with a novice birder friend. The tide was wrong, so they moved along to the Bolinas Sewer Ponds and to their delight spotted a male Blue-winged Teal in the north pond. He was totally elegant, but his slightly smaller companion was a bit more scruffy—a typical female-type brown teal, probably a Blue-winged given its company, but it had an awfully dark

brown cap, a rather prominent down-swept white eyebrow, some suspicious looking gray plumage on the flanks, and black legs when it waded out of the water. Keith had his suspicions, but after all, this was not a bird with which he was intimately familiar, so out came the book, brought along only for the benefit of the new birder, and there it was, right below Blue-winged Teal... **GARGANEY**. A male, probably a young one molting into breeding plumage for the first time. Despite the fact that this is a long-distance Eurasian migrant that has shown up as a vagrant in some pretty unexpected places, this was the first male for northern, coastal California, and one of only a few records for the state. Keith, not known for his reticence or lack of enthusiasm, headed for the phone to put out the word. And the crowds came. For the next three days, the Garganey and the Blue-winged Teal continued to hang out together on the pond, feeding in the reeds and even displaying to each other, to the delight of their admiring audience. Then on Saturday, in one of those unexpected (and yet expected) quirks of nature, the Blue-winged Teal was eaten by a Peregrine. Or so the story went. But rumor, hearsay and surmise had gone awry, for Sunday found the odd couple back swimming together again.

* * * * *

Otherwise, the big news this month is that spring has returned, a bit on the dry side, but spring nonetheless. Wilson's Warblers, Warbling Vireos, Pacific Slope Flycatchers ("Western" certainly was easier to spit out), all proclaim their arrival from the tops of the trees to the depths of the bushes, while masses of shorebirds, rapidly acquiring spectacular breeding plumage, have begun to assemble at staging areas around the bay for the long trek north—on March 25th, 15,000 Western Sandpipers and 15,000 Dunlin as well as substantial numbers of

Dowitchers, Greater Yellowlegs and Black-bellied Plovers were observed on the ponds at Baumberg in south San Francisco Bay. These numbers undoubtedly represent birds that wintered locally as well as migrants arriving from points south.

With a few exceptions, the interesting birds tended to be those that continued to be seen from previous months.

FROM THE SEAS

A **Yellow-billed Loon** was found at Trinidad Harbor on Humboldt Bay on March 23. (JMA) A Monterey Bay pelagic trip on the 4th had a good day—three **Black-footed Albatross**, fifty Northern Fulmars, a few Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, eight Short-tailed Shearwaters, three Black-vented Shearwaters, large numbers of Pomerine Jaegers, two Parasitic Jaegers, twelve Black-legged Kittiwakes, two thousand Rhinocerous Auklets, and best of all, a **Horned Puffin**. (CSp, BHi, GGAS) In addition, ten Northern Fulmars were seen on the 11th in Monterey Harbor (SAS) and thirty more, along with sixty-two Sooty Shearwaters and six Pomerine Jaegers from Pigeon Point on the 25th. (PJM) Two Fork-tailed Storm-petrels were in Monterey harbor on the 11th. (KHa, SAS)

TO THE PONDS

Fourteen Cattle Egrets were seen near Pt. Reyes Station on February 28th. (RS) The individual at Lake Merritt was last reported on Feb. 25th (KiS), while the one at Foster City was there at least through Mar. 12th. (RSTh) Four Greater White-fronted Geese were at Nearys Lagoon in Santa Cruz on the 17th. (MFei) A Snow Goose, first found in November on North Lake in Golden Gate Park, was still being seen on the 17th. (JMR) Brant individuals were present in various locales throughout the winter, but four hundred fourteen passing Pigeon Point on the 25th

are a sign that they too are bitten by spring and are heading north. (PJM) The peripatetic **Tufted Duck** spent the month bouncing back and forth between Elk Glen and Stow Lakes in Golden Gate Park. (MOB) Another adult male Tufted Duck, spotted the 6th on Richardson's Bay, may be the same individual seen there in previous years. (DWh) The Bolinas Lagoon Harlequin Duck appears to be ready to apply for "permanent resident" status. (MOB) Eurasian Wigeon and Oldsquaws continued to be seen around and about—summary coming up next month. A pair of Black Scoters seemed to be a bit out of the ordinary in San Leandro Bay from the 1st to the 17th. (FGB, JMR, TO)

The Lesser Golden Plover flock at the Spaletta Plateau remains at seven (MOB) with an additional eight being seen through the 1st at Lawson's Landing on Tomales Bay. (MLR, GMF) An immature **Ruff**, a great bird for Alameda County, found Feb. 24th at the Hayward Regional Shoreline, remained through March. (DB fide HGC, JM, EM)

A first-year Heerman's Gull at Seal Rocks in San Francisco was an early return or perhaps an unusual lingerer. (JM, SMO) black-legged Kittiwakes were seen in small numbers throughout the period—one at Bolinas Lagoon on the 10th (KH); one in Monterey Harbor on the 11th (SAS); and one at the mouth of Pescadero Creek (RSTh) and eight from Pigeon Pt. (PJM) on the 25th.

TO THE FORESTS AND FIELDS

Small numbers of Bald Eagles winter in this area and are seen regularly though infrequently during the winter months, generally inland, but individuals flying over Bolinas Lagoon on March 12 (KH) and over the mouth of San Leandro Creek on the 24th (RJR) are probably migrants. Likewise a Swainsons Hawk spotted over Portrero Hill in SF on the 19th. (ASH)

The Burrowing Owl continued to roost under the eaves of the Carter-Hodgon Bldg. off of Army St. in SF, at least until the 17th (JSC), and a Long-eared Owl was seen along the Tennessee Valley Trail on the 3rd. (MLR)

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the Nicasio Town Square was last reported on Feb. 27th. (AWi) And on Feb. 27th a Red-naped Sapsucker was found at the Sunset Picnic Area on Mt. Diablo. (fide GFi, MOB) The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** remained at Pine Lake Park through the 24th (DSg), the Ash-throated Flycatcher at American River College in Sacramento through the 3rd (MJL) and the **Least Flycatcher**, last seen at Whitehouse Pool back in January, was refound around the corner at the foot of Balboa Ave. on the 29th. (RS) Cassin's Kingbirds were spotted at Wilder Beach State Park in Santa Cruz on the 6th (DEG fide ELB); Hollister on the 11th (DSg); and two at the Hillside Greens Golf Course in San Joaquin County on the 18th, thought to be the same birds that were there last year. (DGY) The immature Northern Shrike at the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve was last seen the 9th. (JuR)

Once more, a few good warblers—in Golden Gate Park, a Tennessee on the 12th (ASH); a Nashville on the 17th (SMO); and an American Redstart, re-found on the 27th after a lengthy disappearance (JMR); and Palm Warblers—one at Pescadero until Feb. 25th (RSTh); and three at Monterey Harbor on the 11th. (JAsh) And fewer good sparrows—Clay-colored and Swamp (two) in Pescadero through the 11th (RSTh); and White Throated—up to four at GG Park (DFr), one remaining at the Phipps Ranch in Pescadero through the 11th (RSTh), and one at Pine Lake Park through the 10th. (DSg) Eight to fifteen Lapland Longspurs, some in breeding plumage, a real treat,

were found at the Spaletta Plateau on the 24th. (RMS fide KSe, LL)

The long-running Summer Tanager at Pine Lake Park continued to be seen through the 17th. (DSg) An additional immature male Summer Tanager was discovered near the Angler's Lodge in GG Park on the 27th. (JMR)

Two flocks of Lawrence's Goldfinch, up to one hundred thirty-five total, were observed in Hollister on the 11th. (DSg) Three individuals were seen at Chesbro Reservoir in Santa Clara County on the 14th. (MFei)

Wise words for May: watch for warblers.

OBSERVERS

John Asher, D. Bedford, Florence G. Bennett, Howard G. Cogswell, J. Scott Cox, Mike Feighner, Gary M. Fellers, George Finger, D. French, Douglas E. George, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Keith Hansen, Ken Hart (KHa), Bob Hirt, Alan S. Hopkins, Earl Lebow, L. Lieurance, Michael J. Lippsmeyer, many observers (mob), John Mariani, Peter J. Metropulos, E. Myers, Joe Morlan, Scott Morrical, Trad Orr, Jean M. Richmond, Robert J. Richmond, Mary Louise Rosegay, Judy Rothman, Steven A. Schafer, Kevin Sea, Dan Singer, Rich Stallcup, Robert M. Stewart, Kirk Swenson, Darryl Whitworth, Anna Wilcox, David G. Yee

—ANN DEWART

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(415) 763-3010

RARE BOOK AVAILABLE

A copy of William L. Dawson's *Birds of California*, Nature Lover's Edition, in four volumes, autographed, first edition, in excellent condition, is available (price to be negotiated). If interested, please call GGAS office.

BACK YARD BIRDER

Springtime is every birder's favorite time of year. There's the thrill of spotting the first Northern Oriole of the season, hearing the Orange-crowned Warbler's first tremulous trill upon arriving from Central America, observing the furious nest building of wrens and chickadees, and listening to the drumming of woodpeckers. The bird world is bustling with activity, all relating to courtship, pair-bonding, nesting and the raising of a family. It will be months before the busy parent(s) have a respite from this life in the fast lane.

Being in the right place at the right time is an asset in any endeavor. While bird watching, I guess you could call it luck. But, luck and timing are the reasons one continues to bird, even on slow days. Once in a while you are able to observe something first hand that will remain in your bank of special memories.

During courtship many birds engage in some sort of flight display. Hummingbirds perform wonderful "sky dances," describing specific patterns in the air, accompanied by feather noises and buzzy calls. The American Woodcock and the Common Snipe also descend from their aerial displays in erratic swoops, making a characteristic sound. Other birds hover, while some chase their prospective mates.

One of the most dramatic courtship displays occurs within the hawk and eagle families. It was, therefore, a distinct thrill to enjoy the courtship flight of a pair of Black-shouldered Kites while we were driving to Putah Creek. The setting was ideal: a clear blue sky, emerald hills dotted with pink and white flowering fruit trees, the sun warming a field of mustard over which two large white birds were chasing one

another. Suddenly they met in mid-air, one bird flipped upside down and the two whirled like a helicopter, their talons locked. They tumbled and fluttered to the ground, quickly recovered and flew straight up to begin again the entire stylized chase and twirling descent. They repeated this four times before disappearing over the hill. It was a perfect performance!

It would seem that this grasping of talons might be "practice" for a pair of kites. Once the female is incubating their eggs, the male does all the hunting. To surrender food, the female will often take it from the male while he is in slow flight, holding a mouse, e.g., in his feet extended below. She passes below him and flips upside down to grab the food.

Years ago I saw a pair of Red-tailed Hawks in similar flight courtship activity. But, when they came spiraling down to earth, they landed on a steep, rain-soaked grassy hillside. They tumbled downhill for 50' or so before they could disentangle their talons. This was certainly not the dignified, regal act they had intended! I often wondered if they avoided one another thereafter, each one assuming the other was a dangerous influence! (Sorry. It's so tempting to attach human reactions to such a humorous occasion).

We saw more hawk antics at Coyote Hills this spring. We observed a Northern Harrier (formerly the Marsh Hawk) flying in deep u-shaped undulations. This is the spring courtship display of the male, who is showing off for the female above the home-nesting marsh. She may even be below, incubating her eggs. Once again, we were lucky to be there.

I hope some of you have had the luck and the opportunity to see some of our birds' springtime show. It's surely their busiest time of year!

—MEG PAULETICH

FEATHER RIVER COLLEGE Program for Seniors

The College in the Sierra Nevada near Quincy overlooks the majestic Spanish Creek. It offers educational programs in a scenic, remote area (with no homework!). It costs \$265 per person for a week's stay including the program, lodging, three meals Monday through Friday, Sunday dinner and Saturday breakfast, AND round trip transportation on a school bus from the East Bay (Hayward Bart, Alameda City Hall, Oakland Rockridge Bart, El Cerrito Bart). Housing is in College apartments (one bedroom, with living room, kitchen, bathroom, and a small balcony. (A room by yourself *may* be available at an additional charge of \$30. June 24-30: Sierra Ecology, Flora of the Sierra, and California's "Yellow, Green and White Gold" and a visit to a Basque sheepherder camp.

July 22-28: Computers for the Terrified, Scenic Geology, From Valley Fruit to Mountain Ranches. Each session includes a Wednesday trip to Reno. Golf is available (green fees \$18).

Call Alice Soffiotto at (415) 530-0495 for a brochure or for further details.

SINGING, NESTING FIELD TRIP

Alice Hoch will lead a Saturday field trip on May 19 from the Fremont Adult School. The trip will leave the school at 8:30 a.m. and return at 2:30 p.m. The class size will be limited. Pre-register by mail or in person at the Fremont Adult School, 4700 Calaveras Road, Fremont, CA 94538. The fee is \$18 per person. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

The all day trip will watch and listen to local birds as they go about their territorial, courtship and nesting activities. Bring binoculars, scopes, field guides, snacks, lunch and beverages. Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes. Meet promptly at the flagpole.

SOUTHERN MANITOBA TRIP

Earl Lebow of the Santa Cruz Bird Club, (408) 475-5328, reports that there are still spaces open for his ten day trip to Churchill and Southern Manitoba June 16-26. The cost is \$1945 per person including air fare from San Francisco. Call him for details.

FARALLON TRIP

GGAS will sponsor a boat trip to circle the Farallon Islands. Past trips have produced sightings of Tufted Puffin, shearwaters, albatross, Hump-back whales and several other species of marine mammals.

The date is June 24. Space is limited and will be filled on a first come first served basis. We plan an early morning departure from the Emeryville Marina. Reservations can be made by mailing \$28 per person with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to GGAS, 1250 Addison St., #107B, Berkeley, CA 94702. Make checks payable to the Golden Gate Audubon Society, please.

NATURE SOUNDS

The Nature Sounds Society announces its Sixth Annual Field Recording Workshop June 15-17 at the SF State U Field Station at Yuba Pass. The weekend features speakers, workshops and field recording in the varied habitats of the Sierras. Speakers this year will include Dr. Robert Bowman, Jonathan Storm and Dan Dugan. Early registration is advised. For information call Paul Matzner 273-3884 or Adam Liberman 549-9364.

Saturday May 19 and Sunday May 20 there will be a bird sound workshop to introduce participants to area bird songs and methods to learn their songs. The Saturday 1-4 p.m. session at the Oakland Museum will involve the study of sounds with recordings, notes and slides, using the Natural Science

Gallery. The Sunday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. session is a field trip to practice skills learned on Saturday. The instructor will be Dave Cornman, long-time leader of "Birding by Ear" field trips for GGAS. The cost for members of the Museum Society or the Nature Sound Society will be \$25, \$28 for others. Class size is limited to fifteen. For information phone Barbara Papini at 284-4181 or the Natural Sciences Dept. at 273-3884.

WILDERNESS FAIR

Save Sunday, June 10 for the Wilderness Fair at the Sunol-Ohlone Regional Wilderness. From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. there will be a festival of hikes, activities, music, exhibits—all to emphasize the diversity of wilderness places and explore the ideas of the wild. For information call 862-2244.

HABITAT RESTORATION PLANS

The May schedule for the Habitat Restoration Team:

May 6: Gerbode Valley: In January we cleared all visible Capeweed from the scenic Bobcat Trail. Now it is time to go back. We'll inspect the whole trail and remove any Capeweed we missed. Follow-up is the key. (Meet at warehouse at Rodeo Lagoon.)

May 13: Tennessee Valley: Another return to the peaceful, high meadow along Chaparral Trail. The worst Cape-weed infestation in the GGNRA here is getting closer to a place in the history books. Help to finish it off. (Meet at parking lot, end of Tenn. Valley Rd.)

May 20: Pirate's Cove: A surprise trail day treat with a swim for the brave after works. We'll hike in from Muir Beach and spend the day improving the Coastal Trail above Pirate's Cove. Lots of different things to do. Don't miss this one! (Meet at Muir Beach parking lot, east end.)

May 27: Tennessee Valley: With summer near, it's important to follow-up our earlier Capeweed work along the way to the Ocean before the ground gets too hard to work. This will be a key day in preserving the great progress we have made in Tennessee Valley. (Meet at parking lot at end of Tenn. Valley Rd.)

Meeting Time is always 9:30 a.m. every Sunday.

What to bring: Sturdy clothes, work gloves. Lunch and something refreshing to drink. For May 20, the hearty should bring swim suits, towel, warm clothing for after swimming, also foot gear for wading on the rocky shore.

Join the Habitat Restoration Team of the Golden Gate National Recreational Area and receive a free monthly newsletter of Sunday events. Call 556-0693.

FROM THE WESTERN TANAGER Los Angeles Audubon Society

For the past couple of winters, birders have been trooping to Death Valley to harass a small, marginal population of gentle and innocuous species of ground-dove. There have never been more than a handful (unplucked) of individuals there, who seem to be decimated over the course of the winter, only to be replenished the next fall.

Furnace Creek Ranch and its environs, a small green patch in the middle of 1,500 square miles of gravel, functions in the same way as an oceanic island. It attracts plants and animals flying over or swimming by because it stands out like a green thumb, and they stay because it offers certain amenities not available for a long way in any direction: food and shelter.

Because it attracts a lot of animals for its size, it gets relatively crowded, and

just as there are inordinate numbers of surprising species arriving there over time, there are (theoretically) equally inordinate numbers of species leaving Furnace Creek Island over the same length of time. In other words, in a mature biogeographic "island", species colonization rate equals species extinction rate, and both rates are higher than on the vaster continents.

During a visit one weekend in November, friends of mine saw an Eastern Phoebe and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, but missed a Lapland Longspur, a LeConte's Sparrow and a Bufflehead that had been seen only a day or so previously; the following week's bird alert tape announced sightings of Harris' and White-throated Sparrows at Furnace Creek, but no Phoebe or Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Anyone familiar with the area will know that in birding it, one does not simply miss seeing these birds; with assiduity one should miss little or nothing, because the area is so painfully finite and totally accessible. It is that the birds come and go.

Many of them fall prey to raptors and other predators. There is an unusually large number of birds of prey—obeying the same island rules—including Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Last winter a Ruddy Ground-Dove was snatched from before the eyes of its admirers by one of the bold Roadrunners that strut the greensward. This November my friends found the remains of a long- or Short-eared Owl, done in by a bird larger and fiercer than itself.

Other birds suffer the side effects of distraction caused by the great numbers of humans that Furnace Creek also attracts. Some of these people just talk loudly and drive golf carts about; others silently follow the birds around all day. Both kinds of people interrupt the birds'

feeding and resting, and send them up with a flutter likely to attract the eye of any accipiter hidden nearby. In a constricted environment, this effect too is exacerbated

This unfortunate phenomenon will remain a contentious issue in birding circles and is a paradigm for the dilemma facing the human race as a whole. A rarity is discovered; if you get to see it, why shouldn't I, as a fellow member of this aggressively democratic society, get to see it too? So everybody flocks to see the bird until the critical mass is reached and the rarity becomes an extinction, one way or another.

MacARTHUR WILSON

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

Audubon Canyon Ranch (415) 868-9244
 Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970
 Wildlife Sanctuaries & Centers for Nature Education
 under joint sponsorship of Golden Gate, Madrone, Marin
 and Sequoia Audubon Societies
 Jack Harper, President

These are good days to be visiting the Ranch.

It is also time to be planning to help at the Ranch. Docent training classes

will be held from September 1990 to March of 1991. These extensive environmental education classes will enable you to share your love of nature with thousands of Bay Area school children. The docent classes meet once a week for 22 weeks with breaks for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Included are such diverse subjects as life cycles of plants and animals, geology, weather, Native Americans and teaching techniques.

Upon graduation, docents have the knowledge and confidence to lead eager 3rd through 6th graders on the trails on the Ranch. Exciting supplementary enrichment classes are offered throughout the year so that docents may constantly enhance their knowledge.

Registration in the program requires a two-year commitment as a volunteer docent. It includes 12 days each spring and 4 each fall. There is a minimal fee to cover the cost of the training. For further information, you may attend either of two orientation days which are scheduled for May 30 and August 29. For information call ACR at 868-9244.

GIFTS and BEQUESTS — FOR GGAS

FOR THE RARE BIRD ALERT

In Memory of Emil Peterson
 In Honor of Walt Berger

Gift of
 Anonymous

Joan Humphry
 Bill & Hap Fraser
 Piper

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 1250 Addison St., #107B, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull* as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

MARIN OUTINGS

The County of Marin Open Space District offers an array of Education Outings with naturalist Bob Stewart. For information call 499-6405. Those in May feature two hikes to see native grasses and two to tidepools, as well as two birding hikes.

In June "Owls During the Day" on Thursday or Saturday, the fourteenth or sixteenth will take Estero Trail in Point Reyes National Seashore. Meet at the Estero Trail Parking lot at 9 a.m.

BAY AREA BIRD PHOTOS

All meetings take place at 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month at Palo Alto's Lucie Stern Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Road. The May meeting will be May 2 and the last meeting of the season is scheduled for June 6. For information write to BABP, 1019 Loma Prieta Court, Los Altos, CA 94024.

NATIVE FORESTS CONFERENCE

The Center for Conservation Biology and over forty co-sponsors, including GGAS, will present a one day "Native Forests of the Americas" conference at Stanford University. Workshops and panel discussions will cover biological aspects, economics, conservation campaigns, litigative tools and more. A few of the specific topics include Endangered Species of the Forest, Insects, Birds of the Tropics, Sustainable Forestry Practices, Noncommercial Values of the Forests, and Citizen Initiatives—all designed to educate and encourage citizens to participate in forest conservation.

The day will also include an on-going art show, booths set up by co-sponsors, and films on the forests. For information phone 329-1811.

BALLOT

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Leslie Lethridge

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Ruth Dement

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West Bay

Alan Hopkins

East Bay

David Rice

Director (term two years):

West Bay

Tom White

This ballot must be returned to the GGAS office not later than May 22 to be counted. You may vote for any or all of the candidates by placing an x in the box following the candidate's name.



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THE GULL

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GULL Editor, Don Sanford (527-6017)*
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Rare Bird Alert (update) 524-5592
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Chris Carpenter (268-7509)
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Nicki Spillane

Dan Murphy
Bruce Howard

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RARE BIRD ALERT (recorded) (415) 528-0288
Update: 524-5592

Mall for all individuals listed above should be sent to GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$30 per year (individual); \$38 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$10 per year; single issues \$1. High school and college student membership \$18 per year. Senior citizen individual \$21, senior citizen family \$23. Associate Membership in Golden Gate Audubon Society, \$10 per year.

**The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917,
and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.**

The *Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month, and July 15th for September issue.